Michigan Energy Efficiency Contractor's Coalition

Response to Energy Efficiency Question

10. Given current technology, how much energy efficiency is technically feasible in Michigan? What is the remaining cost-effective energy efficiency potential in MI, taking into account: 1) what has been tapped to date; and 2) what will be tapped by the end of 2015 through utility energy optimization programs?

Michigan has only begun to scratch the surface of energy savings. Our energy efficiency industry can secure savings at a 2% standard very easily with existing technology. The issue is to get into more housing units and business establishments.

The U.S. Census Bureau's 2010 data indicates Michigan has 4,525,480 housing units and 219,119 nonfarm business establishments. The actual numbers of these units that have had energy efficiency measures installed is a very difficult number to establish. The number of homes or business that have participated in a utility provided rebate program are data points kept confidential be the issuing utility. There is no clearinghouse collecting this data. Contractors who perform energy upgrades are not required to report such activity. Homeowners and businesses can install many incented energy measures themselves.

Looking at more public programs like the Better Buildings for Michigan (BBFM) or weatherization activity funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) sheds some light on the matter. The very successful BBFM program was able to gain access to 9,500 homes and install some energy savings measures. ARRA funding allowed for just over 29,000 homes to be upgraded at some level. There has been no public program providing subsidized energy upgrades to businesses.

In these projects and most other private-sector projects not all energy savings opportunities identified where addressed. The amount of savings 'left on the table' adds to significant potential savings to be gained in the future. Tracking of savings potential identified in a home or business and the amount of savings achieved by any measures installed is confidential information in utility programs and not required to be reported in the private sector.

Because there is no savings tracking mechanism in the private sector energy efficiency industry and no public access to utility data of the number of units or savings left on the table any statement of actual energy savings is be pure conjecture. Further, any such conjecture would be challenged to quantify how much savings remains – unless you extend back to net-zero energy use.

However, it is reasonable to posit that the number of residential housing units than can realize energy savings with existing technology is easily above 3.5-million. The number of business establishments that can realize energy savings is easily above 175,000.

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